

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LIBREV 00964 011341Z

42

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-11 DRC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-11

NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 TRSE-00

MC-02 OMB-01 L-03 AID-20 IGA-02 PM-07 NSC-07 SS-20

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P 011045Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5645

INFO USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 0964

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BGEN, GB

SUBJ: DC-8 FOR GABON

REF: LIBREVILLE 0952; LIBREVILLE 0960 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENTIAL COUNSELORS PIGOT AND BRU PLAN TO VISIT DEPARTMENT ABOUT AUGUST 13-14 IN FURTHER EFFORT OBTAIN FAVORABLE RESPONSE ON DC-8. PRESIDENT BONGO WANTS DECISION ON AIRCRAFT SALE BY MID-AUGUST IN ORDER TO ENSURE HE HAS APPROPRIATE PERSONAL AIRCRAFT FOR MIDDLE EAST AND ASIAN TOUR PLANNED FOR OCTOBER. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT BONGO'S PRIVY COUNSELOR JACQUES PIGOT CALLED ON ME JULY 31 TO DISCUSS STATUS OF DC-8 SALE. PIGOT BEGAN NOTING PRESIDENT BONGO'S CONTINUED IF SOMEWHAT FRAYED PATIENCE IN FACE OF PROLONGED REVIEW PROCESS. HE ADDED THAT BONGO DETERMINED HAVE AN ANSWER ONE WAY OR ANOTHER BY MID-AUGUST. PIGOT EMPHASIZED ACQUISITION OF DC-8 HAD NOW BECOME MATTER OF PERSONAL PRIDE FOR PRESIDENT. NOT ONLY IS IT GENERALLY KNOWN IN AFRICAN CIRCLES (BECAUSE ONGBONGO-GOWON CORRESPONDENCE) THAT

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 LIBREV 00964 011341Z

BONGO SEEKING AIRCRAFT BUT HE IS ALSO KEEN TO USE HIS

OWN PERSONAL AIRCRAFT FOR PLANNED MIDDLE EAST AND ASIAN SWING CY OCTOBER. UTA HAS WAITING IN ITS PARIS WAREHOUSE ALL THE MATERIAL NECESSARY TO GIVE AIRCRAFT INTERIOR VIP CONFIGURATION. IN CONNECTION WITH BONGO'S FORTHCOMING TRAVEL, PIGOT SAID PRESIDENT PLANS MAKE A NUMBER OF STOPS IN MIDDLE EAST AND PERHAPS IN INDIA EN ROUTE TO PEKING (LIBREVILLE 0960). ACCORDINGLY, BONGO SENDING PIGOT AND FINANCIAL ADVISOR ROLAND BRU TO VISIT DEPARTMENT AUGUST 13 OR 14 IN EFFORT ELICIT FAVORABLE RESPONSE.

3. PIGOT SAID HE KNEW THERE HAD BEEN UNCOMFORTABLE MOMENTS REGARDING AFFRETAIR DC-8 DURING HIS JUNE 28 TALK WITH ACTING DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOLEY. MAKING AN OPENHENDED GESTURE, PIGOT SAID HE UNDERSTOOD DEPARTMENT'S DISPLEASURE REGARDING DISPOSITION OF FIRST DC-8 WHICH HE ADMITTED HAD BEEN "NOT VERY CORRECT." ALL HE COULD SAY AT THIS JUNCTURE, HOWEVER, WAS THAT SECOND DC-8 WAS WHOLLY DIFFERENT MATTER AND WOULD BE USED EXCLUSIVELY IN LEGAL MANNER BY PRESIDENT BONGO AND BY UTA. OAU AWARENESS OF THESE ARRANGEMENTS PLUS CONTRACT WITH UTA SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT GUARANTY FOR USG. PIGOT CONCLUDED SAYING THAT IF AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE NOT FORTHCOMING IN MID-AUGUST BONGO PLANNED "MAKE OTHER ARRANGEMENTS" AND WOULD OF COURSE BE VERY DISPLEASED WITH USG.

4. I TOLD PIGOT THAT AMBASSADOR MCKESSON WAS CURRENTLY REVIEWING SALE OF DC-8 WITH APPROPRIATELY HIGH LEVEL OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON AND THAT HE WAS EXPECTED TO RETURN TO LIBREVILLE AUGUST 14. I ADDED IT WAS THEREFORE POSSIBLE WE MIGHT HAVE RESPONSE FOR PRESIDENT BONGO PRIOR TO PIGOT'S PLANNED ETD LIBREVILLE OF 10-11 AUGUST. I CONFINED SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT ON THE DC-8 SALE TO NOTING OUR EXPERIENCE WITH AFFRETAIR DC-8 DICTATED PRUDENCE AND CAUTIC IN SUBSEQUENT SALES AND MEANT THAT VARIOUS WASHINGTON AGENCIES NEEDED TO STUDY THE DOSSIER FROM EVERY ANGLE TO ENSURE LEGALITY OF SECOND SALE. PIGOT LEFT WITH THE UNDERSTANDING I WOULD COMMUNICATE ANY SIGNIFICANT NEW DEVELOPMENTS TO CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LIBREV 00964 011341Z

HIM AND THAT IN ANY CASE HE WOULD PHONE ME JUST PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FROM LIBREVILLE FOR LAST MINUTE CHECK.

5. COMMENT. CONVERSATION WITH PIGOT WAS MOST PLEASANT AND AMIABLE. HE MADE IT CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT BONGO EXPECTS A DEFINITIVE ANSWER BY AUGUST 13-14. THERE IS LITTLE I CAN ADD TO INFORMATION EMBASSY HAS ALREADY PROVIDED TO DEPARTMENT TO ASSIST IN MAKING

ULTIMATE DECISION OTHER THAN NOTE PURCHASE OF VIP
TRAPPINGS FOR INTERIOR OF AIRCRAFT LENDS FURTHER CREDENCE
TO JUDGMENT BONGO INTENDS SECOND DC-8 FOR LEGITIMATE
(I.E. PERSONAL) USE. I SUBMIT IT IS FARFETCHED TO
BELIEVE HE WOULD GO TO EXPENSE AND BOTHER OF GIVING
DC-8 PLUSH INTERIOR WITH EXPECTATION OF THEN RIPPING
IT OUT TO GIVE AIRCRAFT CARGO CONFIGURATION NECESSARY
FOR RHODESIAN TRADE. PIGOT DID NOT INCIDENTALLY OFFER
LAST POINT AS FURTHER GROUNDS FOR PERMITTING SALE.
EVIDENTLY REFLECTING BONGO'S VIEWS, HE INDICATED PRESIDENT'S
PERSONAL ASSURANCES COUPLED WITH OAU CORRESPONDENCE
AND UTA CONTRACT SHOULD FORM ADEQUATE LEGAL BASIS FOR
CONSUMMATING THE SALE. I WOULD, THEREFORE, RECOMMEND
THAT IF DEPARTMENT CONTEMPLATES LEVYING REQUIREMENT FOR
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION ON GABONESE, IT BE DONE SOON
SO THAT GOG CAN RESPOND BEFORE MID-AUGUST WHICH HAS
EVIDENTLY BECOME FOR BONGO DEADLINE FOR FINAL DECISION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LIBREV00964
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740209-0840
From: LIBREVILLE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740883/aaaacszy.tel
Line Count: 133
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: LIBREVILLE 0952; LIBREVILLE 0960 (NO, TAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <25 FEB 2003 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DC-8 FOR GABON
TAGS: BGEN, GB
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005